

BOOK REVIEWS

Textbook of British Surgery, Volume III. Edited by Sir Henry Souttar and Prof. J. C. Goligher. 1958. Pp. 619, 207 illus. Chapter VII, Venereal and Allied Diseases. By G. O. Horne. Pp. 29, 8 illus. Heinemann Medical Books, London (105s.).

In addition to a chapter (Chapter VII) on "Venereal and Allied Diseases", this third volume of the "Textbook of British Surgery" contains much that is of interest and importance to venereologists, the many descriptions of clinical cases and the methods of treatment advised having the authentic ring of authority and adding significantly to our knowledge. For instance, venereologists will find in the long chapter (147 pages) on "Genito-urinary Surgery" much up-to-date information applicable to their work, including urethrography; acute and chronic retention; diseases of the prostate, especially carcinoma; "the assessment of the case with prostatic obstruction"; and a whole section on "Diseases of the Genitalia". The chapter on "Peripheral Vascular Diseases" describes the surgical treatment of aneurysms, including aortic aneurysms; as gravitational ulcer of the legs may be combined with gummatous ulceration, the information given on "Ulceration of the Legs" should be useful in the V.D. Clinic. The well-illustrated chapter on "Plastic Surgery" presents an "Operative Plan" for the treatment of hypospadias and also describes the correction of syphilitic saddle-nose; the improvement attainable in the latter by plastic repair is illustrated by striking photographs. "Surgery in the Tropics" is the subject of an attractive chapter, and among the conditions considered those of especial value to venereologists are "Ulcerating Granuloma of the Pudenda", "Bancroftian Filariasis", "Lymphogranuloma Inguinale", "Schistosomiasis", "Leprosy" and "Yaws". In "Radiology as a Diagnostic Aid in Clinical Surgery", the section on "Oesophageal Varices" will arrest attention, and that on the "Urinary Tract" is comprehensive and well illustrated by photographs. "Radiotherapy in the Treatment of Malignant Diseases" deals authoritatively with the radiotherapy of carcinoma of the bladder, and of the penis ("more certainly cured by surgery than by radiation"), and also considers seminoma and teratoma of the testis, and carcinoma of the prostate ("not now treated by radiation"). The surgery of the endocrine glands is described in chapters on "The

Adrenal Glands" (with accent on sub-total adrenalectomy) and "Surgery of the Parathyroid Glands" (with accent on osteitis fibrosa cystica and the surgical treatment of hyperparathyroidism). The complications of "Blood Transfusion" are emphasized and there is extended consideration of the new work on "Fluids and Electrolytes". To round off this literary banquet come chapters on "Haemorrhage, Shock, and the Illness of Trauma" and "Chemotherapy in Surgery"—both subjects of the greatest topical importance. In the last chapter, that on Chemotherapy, the "Problem of Resistance" is fully stressed, and, "Urinary Infections" find a place under "Chemotherapy in Practice".

Reverting to Chapter VII, the new additions to the literature of venereal diseases have been so great that no mean feat of compression is required to contract the subject to within the compass of a chapter of less than thirty pages. That Dr. Gordon Horne has succeeded in doing just this, with, on the whole, preservation of readability and no loss of clarity, will be readily conceded by the generality of his readers. While the general tenor of the chapter undoubtedly represents accepted current teaching, there are certain apparent inaccuracies or discrepancies. The *Treponema pallidum* is described as being "usually between 7 and 12 μ in length" and consisting of "from six to twenty spirals". It is generally conceded that the length of each coil is about 1 μ so that twenty spirals would make an upper limit of typical length of about 20 μ . Again, the statement that "It (*T. pallidum*) moves slowly and purposefully across the field", seems debatable in so far that, in the absence of waves in the serum, progression across the field is much less obvious than the active concertina-like and lateral bending movements displayed "on its own ground".

In his consideration of the treatment of syphilis, the author seems to dismiss bismuth and the arsenicals somewhat cursorily, the latter as having "no place in treatment except in the rare event of prohibitive sensitivity to penicillin". But, one may ask,—"Is serious intolerance of penicillin so very rare these days?" Some published reports indicate otherwise. In addition to his sweeping rejection of the arsenicals and bismuth, Dr. Horne's defection from the traditional includes stigmatizing the standard serological tests for syphilis as "frail and liable to

error". While rightly emphasizing their limitations, to condemn these tests as "frail", with all that adjective's subtle connotation, is to be something less than just in view of the splendid service they have given us in the many years of the past, and in view also of what they are still doing for us to-day. Chancroid is rather "played down" as "this relatively rare venereal disease",—"rare" certainly in this country, and therefore a correct description in so far as purely British surgery is concerned, but chancroid is very prevalent among the uncircumcized in many tropical countries and in the last world war was a menace to troops stationed, for example, in the Philippines. Probably pressure on space leads to enforced generalization, but, even so, definite description would take little more room than such vague expressions as "a suitable speculum", "a suitable syringe", or "a weak antiseptic".

Constructive suggestions would be to recommend the inclusion, under the subheadings "Cardio-vascular Syphilis" and "Ancillary Treatment", of a reference to pages 168–170 of the same volume for details of the surgical treatment of aneurysm; also reference to page 326 and page 332 for fuller descriptions of granuloma venereum and lymphogranuloma inguinale.

Apart from two good photographs, the illustrations have been mostly taken from another author's "Textbook of Venereal Disease". Looking, however, at this magnificent "Textbook of British Surgery", now under consideration, as a likely source of information for students, especially advanced students

and post-graduates reading for higher degrees, exception might be taken to Fig. 140, which is misleading, not only in that "Flagellae" is not the plural of flagellum, but also that the *Trichomonas vaginalis* is wrongly represented as having only three free flagella: it is a tetra-trichomonas with four free flagella. Summing up—to strike a proper balance, one wishes to congratulate the author on producing a chapter on "Venereal and Allied Diseases" chosen to take its due place in this third volume of one of the most illustrious and monumental contributions to the current literature of British surgery.

R.C.L.B.

Report of the Medical Research Council for the year 1956–57. Cmnd. 453. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London. (13s.)

This report includes a brief statement on "The Changing Pattern of Serological Tests for Syphilis" (p. 23). It concludes that "... the T.W.R. test may well replace the time-honoured Wassermann reaction and other similar tests performed with normal tissue extracts, as the routine laboratory test for the diagnosis of syphilis. It seems therefore that the present trend is to employ treponemal antigens in serological tests as a means of avoiding most, if not all, of the false positive reactions which have been the bane of serological tests for syphilis for the last 50 years; and the general adoption of specific tests in the diagnosis of syphilis would be welcomed by laboratories as a return to normal immunological techniques in serology."